

# Promoting public confidence

*(Note that our presentation content was drafted pre-Covid 19 and therefore any plans and next steps referred to in this presentation may be amended)*

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# Introduction

- Regulation and public confidence
- Why public confidence is important?
- The current challenges about regulation and public confidence
- Key findings from GDC research about what promotes and maintains public confidence

# Dental regulation and public confidence

The GDC's statutory objectives are:

- to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of the public
- to promote and maintain **public confidence** in regulated dental professions, and
- to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct.



# Dental regulation and public confidence

GDC hypothesis in 2017:

“**Public confidence** is a development and modernisation of a concept that has long been associated with professional healthcare regulation, which is that the job of the regulator is to safeguard ‘the reputation of the profession’.

“This has arguably led to regulators getting involved in matters of public and private morals that may not have looked out of place a century ago, but seem increasingly out of step with modern society.”

# Regulation and public confidence

- Current evidence and understanding is limited
- Need for a wider debate about public confidence, regulation and proportionate use of enforcement powers

*“Among professionals there is little understanding of what actions by a healthcare professional might lead to the public losing confidence in the profession. The PSA, working with professional regulators, should review how the impact on public confidence is assessed in reaching fitness to practise decisions about individual healthcare professionals, and develop guidance to support consistent decision making in this area.”*

# Regulation and public confidence

*“There is a need for more extensive research with the public to understand their views on different kinds of behaviour and to further explore any potential differences in views of different professions and in the views of the public across the UK, building on other published research”*

Professional Standards Authority: How is public confidence maintained when fitness to practise decisions are made?(2019)

# Patient and public annual survey

- Annual public and patient survey (nine years)
- Commissioned research: mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative (survey and semi-structured interviews and a coproduced workshop)
- Coproduced research: business 'leads' at GDC and public involved in instrument content
- 2019 survey found (n=1,589 adults aged 15 or over from across the UK):
  - The majority of the public (83%) were confident in dental care
  - Significantly less confidence found in subgroup analysis (e.g. age, ethnicity)

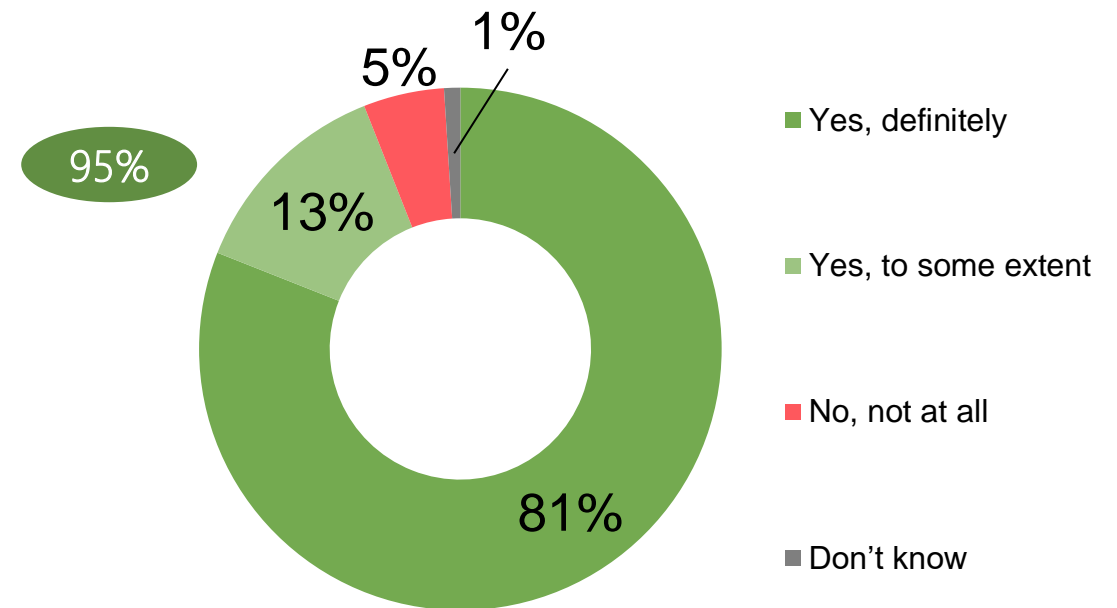
# Patient and public annual survey

- Incidents in the public domain that had impacted public confidence in dentistry affected by:
  - Scale and duration of incident,
  - Perceived risk to public
  - lack of enforcement / corrective action
  - Poor adherence to professional standards/low levels of trust



# The majority of patients had confidence in the last dental professional they saw

- The majority said they had confidence in the last dental professional they saw (95%)
- Overall the public were also confident about the way dental care is delivered



***During your last dental appointment, did you have confidence in the dental professional you saw?***  
GDC public and patients' survey, 2019 N=1,589

# Patient and public annual survey

In-depth interviews and deliberative workshop were commissioned to explore professionalism and confidence issues. Public confidence test scenarios involved:

## 1. Dental professional specific scenarios:

- Dental professional commits credit card fraud
- Non-disclosure of criminal conviction to regulator (driving charge)
- Dentist involved in domestic incident/public disturbance)

## 2. Reputational/public confidence in institutions/types of people

3. **Being treated as a consumer v patient:** how do members of the public want to be considered for types of dental treatment

# The perceived level of risk to the public and the wider context of a case influenced perceptions

## The scale of the case or scandal impacted public confidence:

- Large number of professionals involved
- Multiple victims

# The perceived risk to the public and the context of a case influenced perceptions

**The greater the perceived risk to the public, the more it was seen to impact public confidence:**

- Perceived risk to the general impacted public confidence
- Death/seriousness also impacted confidence
- Healthcare professionals – trusted and respected

# Expectations of a profession and trust were influenced impact on public confidence

**Where other parties were seen to be partly responsible, public confidence in the wider system was questioned rather than public confidence in the professionals:**

- Systems' failure to prevent and/or investigate
- Bawa-Garba – confidence in the hospital was issue
- Systems failures, impact confidence in monitoring and regulation

# Expectations of a profession and trust were influenced impact on public confidence

## **The relationship between expectations of a profession and the level of trust in that profession affected public confidence:**

- For healthcare professionals, expectations were high
- When serious harm experienced - the risk to the public was seen to be high
- Levels of trust were very high in healthcare professionals relative to the other groups

# Public confidence

## key messages from research

**When incidents had impacted public confidence, there were four main factors that influenced the scale of that impact among participants:**

1. Number of people involved
2. Perceived risk
3. Systems, monitoring and regulation
4. Public expectations and trust

## Next steps

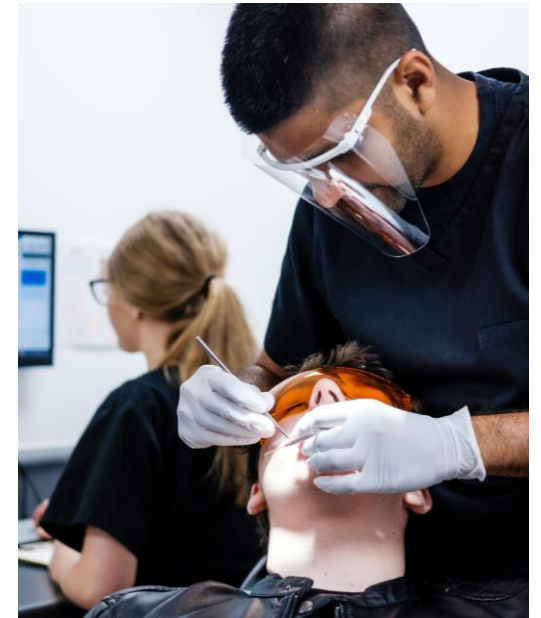
GDC has a programme of related research related to public confidence, which enables evidence informed decision-making across the all areas of our business:

- Fitness to practise and complaints data analysis - better understanding and mitigating 'risk of incidents' (data sharing)
- Reviews planned of teeth whitening, cosmetics, orthodontics (understand risk and use evidence to inform regulatory and others' responses)



## Next steps, continued....

- Reviews and research into professionalism and preparedness for practice
- Annual surveys (dental professionals and the public)
- Cross regulatory research - the concept of seriousness in fitness to practise cases
- Research into how we communicate with all stakeholders, including the public



# Thank you. Questions?

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